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Official Records

First Committee
20th meeting
Friday, 20 October 2000, 3 p.m.
New York

Chairman: Mr. Guani ..... (Uruguay)

In the absence of the Chairman, Mr. Guani (Uruguay), Vice-Chairman, took the Chair.

The meeting was called to order at 3.10 p.m.

Agenda items 65 to 81 (*continued*)

Thematic discussion on item subjects; introduction and consideration of all draft resolutions submitted under all disarmament and international security items

Mr. Franco (Colombia) (*spoke in Spanish*): The delegation of Colombia has the honour to take the floor on agenda item 75 (w), entitled "Small arms", on behalf of the Rio Group of countries.

The Rio Group commends the efforts of the United Nations and regional and subregional organizations to combat the stockpiling, destabilizing circulation and illicit trafficking of small arms. In the Americas, the States of the hemisphere have pledged to implement the provisions of the Inter-American Convention Against the Illicit Manufacturing of and Trafficking in Firearms, Ammunition, Explosives, and Other Related Materials and to cooperate among themselves to prevent, and ultimately to eradicate, these scourges.

In addition, within the framework of the Inter-American Drug Abuse Control Commission, these same States have pledged to implement the model regulations, which fulfil a complementary function in the implementation of measures to ensure that the trade in firearms, parts, components and ammunition can be carried out only under strict control at the points of exportation, importation and transit.

A number of initiatives designed to combat the illicit traffic in small arms and to reduce their stockpiling and excessive circulation are also under way in other regions and subregions. These regional initiatives reflect the growing concern of the international community at the consequences of uncontrolled proliferation of and illicit trafficking in small arms for peace, security and social and economic development in many countries and regions. Nevertheless, this concern should now also be reflected in the attitude of those countries that, because of the absence of a global regime to regulate and monitor the production, distribution, exportation and importation of these arms, still permit their transfer without major restrictions, thereby facilitating access to the small arms market by groups and individuals who operate outside the law, and fostering corruption among those who take advantage of the situation to make huge profits. More than the excessive stockpiling of small arms, which cannot have such consequences when arms are strictly controlled by the State, the countries members of the Rio Group are concerned by the easy availability of these arms in the international market place, their indiscriminate circulation among the civilian population, their use in violent and criminal actions and, in particular, their illicit trafficking, which, as a result of the lack of effective control by States over their production and trade, has the most destabilizing consequences. Of the enormous quantity

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of small arms circulating in countries where armed conflicts have ended, many weapons reach other countries through clandestine and illicit channels.

That trend must be stopped through actions aimed at preventing traffickers and criminals from gaining access to and easily obtaining these arms. Otherwise, the arms in circulation will continue to be used in illegal trade, or as currency in exchange for basic commodities, drugs or other illegal products. Despite the progress made in this area, the unequivocal commitment of the international community is needed in order to continue to develop common approaches to the control and monitoring of the trade in these arms, with a view to harmonizing norms and procedures to prevent their stockpiling and destabilizing circulation and to eradicate the illicit trafficking in such arms.

In addition, more must be done to strengthen the capacity of States to combat the manufacture of and illicit trafficking in small arms and light weapons, ammunition and explosives through measures such as the establishment of multisectoral committees to coordinate and orient the activities of national bodies and agencies responsible for the control of these arms. In the fight against the destabilizing circulation of and illicit trafficking in small arms, an important role is also played by civil society, which, in addition to complying with the applicable norms and regulations, must also help to foster a culture of peace that stigmatizes the use of these arms and creates greater awareness of the destabilizing consequences of the uncontrolled circulation of and illicit trafficking in small arms.

Before concluding, I wish to reiterate the support of the members of the Rio Group for Ambassador Carlos Dos Santos of Mozambique in the excellent work that he is doing at the helm of the Preparatory Committee of the United Nations Conference on the Illicit Trade in Small Arms and Light Weapons in All Its Aspects. The Rio Group also welcomes the endorsement of the candidacy of Ambassador Camilo Reyes of Colombia by the countries members of the Non-Aligned Movement to preside over that Conference.

Mr. Fadaifard (Islamic Republic of Iran): It is my pleasure to introduce the draft resolution entitled "Missiles", contained in document A/C.1/55/L.1. The draft resolution on this subject is being presented for the second consecutive year. In the same spirit as last year, it is centred on the main notion of addressing the issue of missiles in all its aspects.

Missiles are among the main components of military operations and an important consideration in military strategies. Today all major Powers in the world have reserved a prominent role for missiles in their military planning. Missiles are part and parcel of nuclear weapons, as their means of delivery. They are also an effective means of carrying chemical and biological weapons. Similarly, in the conventional field, many countries, as well as military alliances, have defined a specific role for missiles to carry out strike missions and to deter the adversary from launching military offensives.

Recently, concerns have been raised over the development of missiles at both global and regional levels. We share that concern and believe that such development can affect the security environment, particularly at the regional level. However, due to the complexity of the issue, no common, easy approach or solution is at hand. Some partial solutions in place among some countries, through coordination at national levels, may be effective only for some aspects related to missiles, but at the same time would produce other negative consequences. The issue of missiles is a global issue and partial or very narrowly defined measures to deal with missiles are not conducive to generally accepted results. We need to deal with a global issue globally.

The draft resolution on missiles this year is mainly a reproduction of last year's text. The General Assembly last year requested Member States to convey their views on the issue of missiles in all its aspects to the Secretary-General of the United Nations. Some countries, including my own, transmitted their views, as is reflected in the report of the Secretary-General. The only new element in this year's draft is operative paragraph 2, which requests the Secretary-General of the United Nations to establish a study group to assist him in preparing a report on the issue of missiles in all its aspects. The mandate for such a group, though quite general, is also quite comprehensive. That, in our view, is the requirement for a good beginning to the process of addressing the issue of missiles at the global level. We believe that the initiation of such a study can prepare the ground for furthering our efforts in the near future to address this issue in a more structured manner within the United Nations.

All of us are aware that approaches towards addressing the issue of missiles are different, and initiatives that have been taken so far have not been taken in any specific framework. Dialogue is lacking in this very important field. This United Nations study group would be the best forum in which to structure a constructive dialogue on an issue about which we all have common concerns. We sincerely hope that, with the broadest support accorded to the draft resolution, we will establish the United Nations study group and commence discussing the issue fruitfully next year.

Mr. Mouro (Brazil) (*spoke in Spanish*): It is my honour to speak on behalf of the countries of the Common Market of the South (MERCOSUR) — Argentina, Brazil, Paraguay and Uruguay — and Bolivia and Chile, on the issue of general disarmament.

At the last session of the Assembly, we referred to the main commitments contained in the Political Declaration that established the MERCOSUR countries and Bolivia and Chile as a zone of peace, signed at the MERCOSUR presidential summit held in Ushuaia, Argentina, on 24 July 1998. The Declaration was circulated as document A/53/297.

At this time I should like to refer to the actions that the MERCOSUR countries, Bolivia and Chile have taken in order to carry out these commitments. First, we continued to strengthen the mechanisms for consultation and cooperation on matters of security and defence that already exist in the region and the linkages between them. At the regional level, confidence-building and measures to consolidate cooperation and integration have been adopted. For example, a joint mechanism for registering buyers and sellers of small arms was created; cooperation activities in the area of demining have taken place and there have been bilateral meetings between our defence ministers.

Secondly, our commitment to supporting the full application and improvement of the various instruments and mechanisms for the non-proliferation of nuclear weapons and other weapons of mass destruction was set out in our Declaration to mark the thirtieth anniversary of the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons (NPT), document A/54/833. In the Declaration, we also expressed our intention to carry out all the efforts required to ensure the Treaty's full and universal implementation in order to promote the final objective, a world free of nuclear weapons and other weapons of mass destruction. In this context, we welcome Chile's ratification of the Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty on 12 July last.

Thirdly, we are determined to continue moving forward within MERCOSUR, Bolivia and Chile, towards establishing a zone free from anti-personnel mines and to endeavour to extend that zone to cover the entire western hemisphere. In the past year Argentina and Brazil have issued our national reports on transparency measures in line with article 7 of the Ottawa Convention, and the Government of Chile has started its demining activities in this regard. As well, on 6 and 7 November next in Buenos Aires a regional seminar on the destruction of mines has been organized by Argentina and Canada with the participation of the Organization of American States and the United Nations Regional Centre for Peace headquartered in Lima. The objective of that meeting will be to become a forum for debate to discuss the process of destroying stockpiled mines and experience gained in that task.

Fourthly, once again we would like to reaffirm our commitment to broaden and systematize the information we provide to the Register of Conventional Arms and to establish a uniform methodology to provide information on military expenditures. We endorse the recommendations contained in the report of the Panel of Governmental Technical Experts on the functioning and development of the United Nations Register of Conventional Arms, and we welcome the bilateral initiative between Argentina and Chile on establishing uniform methodology for reporting on military expenditures.

Fifthly, as a way of continuing our encouragement of cooperation for the exclusively safe and peaceful use of nuclear energy, at the Review Conference of the NPT we expressed the belief of the MERCOSUR countries, Bolivia and Chile, that nuclear activities for peaceful uses should be carried out on the basis of transparency and in compliance with internationally accepted standards of nuclear safety and physical protection of nuclear materials. We believe that the use of nuclear energy in our region is closely linked to the adoption and implementation of appropriate security measures, which increase confidence that the environment will be respected in the use of this type of energy, thereby ensuring that it will be more widely accepted by our populations.

In conclusion, we would like to repeat our commitment to continue moving ahead in carrying out the objectives of the MERCOSUR zone of peace Declaration, with a view, in the near future, to being able to say with satisfaction that we have fully reached the objectives we have set ourselves.

Mr. Gahona (Belize): I have the honour to speak on behalf of the Latin American and Caribbean Group. Latin America and the Caribbean managed to avoid the nuclear race and managed to overcome the occurrence of some localized conflicts that were worsened by the cold war competition with a committed and independent attitude that favoured both nuclear and conventional disarmament. With the signing of the Treaty of Tlatelolco it became the first inhabited nuclear-weapon-free region. Within the current disarmament context, we are pleased with the active participation of its members in all forums and mechanisms that open up some possibility for total nuclear disarmament, which is rightly interpreted as a goal for all humanity. Aside from that, we share the concern of broad sectors of the international community because of the lack of progress in this process and in the mere definition of the routes that should inexorably lead to general disarmament, particularly nuclear disarmament.

We are also conscious that our problems with regard to security have their own characteristics. We do not yet feel free from conflicts, including low-intensity conflicts nurtured by poverty and marginalization, nor are we completely free from global tensions. That is why the region, without ignoring the maximum priority that must be assigned to the process that will lead to disarmament, particularly nuclear disarmament, assigns great importance, among other items, to the upcoming negotiations on illegal trafficking in small arms and light weapons, an item that is close to its own specific social and economic problems and its security. The activities of the Regional Centre have formed part of this regional concern, and its work has expressed the linking of security with development.

All this leads us to congratulate ourselves on the General Assembly's decision at its last session to approve the revitalization of the United Nations Regional Centre for Peace, Disarmament and Development in Latin America and the Caribbean, supporting specific efforts by some of the region's countries and a regional consensus in favour of this measure. Now, one year after the Centre had restarted its activities, we appreciate its vast range, covered by an integral framework of the concept of peace. Draft resolution A/C.1/55/L.17, which I am submitting as Chairman of the Latin American and Caribbean Group, expresses its satisfaction at the positive effect of the timing of this collective decision. We trust that the draft resolution will once more receive the unanimous support of the Assembly.

With the relaunching of the Centre, the Department for Disarmament Affairs has brought the Organization nearer to our region. The Centre has the general mandate, among other matters, to assist member States in multilateral negotiations in favour of disarmament, in the performance of deliberative activities to adopt rules and agreements, in the promotion of openness in military matters and other measures of trust and in promoting a regional approach to the subject of disarmament in all its aspects, including nuclear disarmament. We believe that this mandate is a propitious one and will be highly beneficial for the region, particularly as a preparation for important disarmament and arms control negotiations which will have a marked effect on the subject of regional security. The region assigns great importance to the preparations for and holding of the United Nations Conference on the Illicit Trade in Small Arms and Light Weapons in All Its Aspects, to be held in 2001. That is why the draft resolution emphasizes the activities performed this year by the Centre and also invites States to enrich its agenda and incorporate more and more of its activities. Thus, the work of the Centre will respond to the requests and interests of the countries of Latin America and the Caribbean and their peculiarities within the broad subject of security and development. We believe that an agenda of the Centre that is thus developed will be highly representative and will help us to achieve a common perception of our security problems and in that way provide us with a more coherent position with regard to the problems of global security and development.

Mr. Ibragimov (Uzbekistan): I have the honour to take the floor on behalf of five Central Asian States, namely, the Republic of Kazakhstan, the Kyrgyz Republic, the Republic of Tajikistan, Turkmenistan and the Republic of Uzbekistan. I should like to introduce, for the consideration of the Committee, the draft resolution entitled "Establishment of a nuclear-weapon-free zone in Central Asia", document

A/C.1/55/L.45/Rev.1, which was prepared through our collective efforts.

The text of the draft is very close to the texts of General Assembly resolutions 52/38 S and 53/77 A, which in previous years enjoyed broad support and were adopted by the General Assembly by consensus. The current draft resolution reflects new developments that have taken place in connection with the creation of a Central Asian nuclear-weapon-free zone since that time. We are very glad to see that the issue of the establishment of nuclear-weapon-free zones in different parts of the world on the basis of arrangements freely arrived at among the States of the region concerned has found its solid place on the international disarmament agenda. Nowadays it is universally recognized that the establishment of nuclear-weapon-free zones enhances regional stability and makes a significant contribution to the strengthening of international peace and stability, as well as firmly upholding the disarmament and non-proliferation process.

We welcome the active involvement of the international community in the process of the development of existing and new nuclear-weapon-free zones in different parts of the world. Up to the present, these efforts have successfully resulted in the establishment of nuclear-weapon-free zones in South-East Asia, Africa and Latin America and the Caribbean. The treaties of Tlatelolco, Rarotonga, Bangkok and Pelindaba make an important contribution to maintaining and strengthening the regime of the non-proliferation of nuclear weapons and nuclear disarmament, representing an important step towards the realization of the principles and objectives of the disarmament and non-proliferation process and a contribution to the maintenance of international peace and security.

Since the adoption by consensus of General Assembly resolution 53/77 A on 4 December 1998, the Central Asian countries, with substantial assistance from the United Nations, have conducted a number of intensive meetings and consultations with experts from our countries on the establishment of the zone. As a result of those discussions we have made progress on aspects of a treaty on the establishment of a nuclear-weapon-free zone in Central Asia. In this regard, we wish to express our appreciation to Mr. Kofi Annan, Secretary-General, the Department for Disarmament Affairs, led by Mr. Dhanapala, and to the United Nations Regional Centre for Peace and Disarmament in Asia and the Pacific, led by Mr. Tsutomu Ishiguri, for the assistance they have rendered in the ongoing process. On behalf of all five countries of Central Asia, allow me to express our sincere hope that this draft resolution, as with similar resolutions in previous years, will find the unanimous support of delegations and will be adopted by consensus during the current session of the Committee.

Mr. Ogunbanwo (Nigeria): Before introducing draft resolution A/C.1/55/L.13 on behalf of the sponsors, allow my delegation to join you, Mr. Chairman, in welcoming this year's group of disarmament fellows, who are on a study visit to United Nations Headquarters in New York in order to allow them to familiarize themselves with the work of the First Committee and the Department for Disarmament Affairs. We hope that their study visit will provide them with an educational experience that will have a positive impact on their future careers.

My purpose in asking for the floor is to introduce draft resolution A/C.1/55/L.13, entitled "United Nations disarmament fellowship, training and advisory services" and I do so on behalf of the delegations of Algeria, Argentina, Australia, Brazil, Ethiopia, Finland, Germany, Ghana, Greece, Guinea, Japan, Liberia, Mongolia, New Zealand, Nicaragua, the Niger, Pakistan, Romania, the Russian Federation, Sierra Leone, South Africa, Sri Lanka, the Sudan, Swaziland, Tunisia, the United States of America, Zambia, Zimbabwe and my own delegation.

The decision to establish a United Nations disarmament fellowship programme was taken by the General Assembly in 1978, at the first special session of the General Assembly devoted to disarmament. The stated purpose of establishing the programme was to promote expertise in disarmament in more Member States, in particular in developing countries. Since its inception the programme has consistently striven to meet the objectives set for it by the General Assembly. An evaluation of the effectiveness and impact of the programme has revealed the following: in 1979, when the programme began its operations, it trained 20 Government officials from 20 countries. By the end of this year the programme will have trained about 500 Government officials from more than 150 countries who are now knowledgeable in the field of disarmament and related security matters.

Apart from providing individual benefits to the fellows, the programme has also provided benefits to the diplomatic services of which the fellows are members and to various multilateral disarmament institutions through the well-informed reports that the fellows made. Many fellows have operated in representative capacities abroad as members of the permanent missions of their countries, including as ambassadors. Indeed, several former fellows are in this room participating in the work of the First Committee as representatives of their countries. In 1999 the United Nations Office of Internal Oversight Services reviewed and evaluated the various United Nations programmes. In its report, the Office of Internal Oversight Services described the United Nations disarmament fellowship programme as "the most successful United Nations training programme in the entire United Nations system".

My delegation would like to take this opportunity to express its appreciation to all Member States and organizations that have consistently supported the programme, thereby contributing to its success. We are equally grateful to the Secretary-General for the diligence with which the Organization has implemented the programme over the years. It is our hope that the draft resolution will be adopted by consensus when the time comes to take action on it.

The Chairman (*interpretation from Spanish*): We have heard the last speaker on the list.

I shall now call on those representatives who wish to speak in exercise of the right of reply.

Mr. Itzchaki (Israel): In deference to the Committee's valuable time I will speak only briefly in reference to the statement made earlier this week by the Iraqi representative regarding the Anti-Ballistic Missile Treaty (ABM). It must be emphasized that the subject under consideration is a purely bilateral issue between the United States and the Russian Federation. It is indefensible for the Iraqi delegation to use this discussion as a pretext for levelling accusations against Israel and its relationship with the United States.

Secondly, I should like to express my delegation's surprise that these allegations emanate from a country that has a well-known record of using missiles to attack civilian populations. We suggest that Iraq not question the need for Israel's missile defence in the light of the fact that Israeli civilians have more than once been the target of Iraqi missiles. Israel should therefore not apologize for being obliged, for reasons that are well known, to protect its citizens from attack. It seems more than slightly ironic that we are being questioned on our need for missile defence by the very nation that continues to threaten us, especially in the light of its President's recent statement in this regard.

Mr. Mohammed (Iraq) (*spoke in Arabic*): I have asked to speak in order to reply to the points just raised. It is indeed very strange that the representative of Israel should talk about the disarmament of Iraq when all are aware that Israel has not acceded to the international treaties and conventions concerning weapons of mass destruction, whether multilateral or bilateral. Israel possesses an arsenal that is constantly being developed. It tramples upon all international calls and resolutions of the Security Council relevant to the subject.

It seems that the previous speaker feigns ignorance that in 1981 Iraq was a target of attack. Security Council resolution 487 (1981) called upon Israel to abide by international treaties and to join the safeguards regime of the International Atomic Energy Agency. The question of the disarmament of Iraq is being considered by Iraq. Specific mechanisms were established to that end. We are subject to stringent international sanctions and daily attacks without a mandate from the Security Council.

The meeting rose at 3.45 p.m.